Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health of the Rural District of Plomesgate.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit to you my Twenty-third Annual Report upon the Sanitary condition of the Rural District of Plomesgate.

Births.

During the year 1903 there were registered 362 births, giving a birth-rate of 22·8 per thousand inhabitants, which shews a decrease of ·5 on the previous year.

Deaths.

The deaths registered in the District during the past year numbered 210, being 56 less than the number registered during the previous year, and giving a death-rate of 13·2, being 3·6 lower than the rate for 1902. The number of deaths of Infants under 1 year of age was 39, being 8 less than in 1902, and giving a death-rate of 107·7 per 1,000 births registered, which compares favourably with 1902, when the rate per 1,000 was 127·3. Of this number 17 were born prematurely. Of the 210 deaths, 92 were over 65 years of age. There were 12 deaths in the Union Workhouse, 8 of which were over 65 years of age.

Deaths from Zymotic Diseases.

There were only 5 deaths from the principal zymotic diseases, being 6 less than in 1902. Of this number 4 were from Measles and its sequelæ, and 1 from Diarrhœa.

Outbreaks of Infectious Disease.

During the year, 45 cases of infectious disease were notified, being 16 less than in 1902. This number consisted of 17 cases of diphtheria, 18 cases of scarlet fever, 3 of typhoid fever, 6 of erysipelas and 1 of puerperal fever.

Small-pox.

No case of small-pox occurred during the year in the Plomesgate Rural District.

Diphtheria.

The 17 cases of diphtheria were in the following parishes:—Orford 1, Framlingham 5, Kettleburgh 6, Sudbourne 4, and Wickham Market 1. Each outbreak was confined to a single house, and in each case was caused by the opening of drains, excepting those at Orford and Sudbourne which were imported. No death was registered from this disease during the year.

Scarlet fever.

There were 18 cases of scarlet fever notified, of which 9 occurred at Kenton in 2 houses, 5 at Kettleburgh, and 1 each in the parishes of Butley, Hoo, Framlingham and Cretingham. In all the cases the infection was traced to sources outside the District. No death was registered from this disease during the year.

Enteric fever.

There were 3 cases of enteric fever, 2 being at Framlingham, and 1 at Eyke. One of the cases at Framlingham occurred after the patient returned from camping with the Volunteers, and the one at Eyke was no doubt infected by a daughter of the patient, who returned from service after illness. The source of the other case at Framlingham could not be traced. There was no death in the District from this disease.

Erysipelas.

There were 6 cases of erysipelas, 3 being at Framlingham, and 1 each at Earl Soham, Blaxhall and Rendleshsm.

Puerperal fever.

There was only 1 case of this disease, and this ended fatally.

Whooping-cough.

The District was quite free from whooping-cough during the year.

Measles. At Kettleburgh, Eyke and Sudbourne, there were outbreaks of Measles in the early part of the year, which necessitated the closing of the Schools in those parishes. In 4 cases deaths were registered from this disease, as being the primary cause.

Influenza. This disease was not prevalent in any part of the District during the year, but there were isolated cases, 2 deaths being attributed to this disease.

Diarrhœa. The District has been remarkably free from diarrhœa during the year.

Phthisis. The number of deaths registered from this disease was 19, being 2 less than in the previous year.

Water. The water supply during the year has been largely increased owing to the very heavy rain-fall which has been experienced during the last nine months of the year. I have examined 40 samples of water during the year, 13 of which were found to be unfit for drinking purposes. Nothing has been done to improve the quality of the water obtained from the pump in Middle Street, Wickham Market.

Over-crowding. There were 3 cases of over-crowding which were remedied by a part of the families boarding and sleeping out.

In the month of May, a number of persons living in Wickham Market were seriously affected by partaking of unwholesome brawn. Steps were taken immediately that prevented further sale of the affected meat.

Slaughter-houses. The Slaughter-houses have all been inspected and found in a satisfactory state.

Common Lodging-houses. The common Lodging-house at Framlingham has been twice inspected and found very satisfactory.

Sanitary Inspector's Report. The Sanitary Inspector's Report shows that during the year, he has made house-to-house visits to over 2,000 premises, and suggested improvements and reported nuisances when necessary. In nearly every case where orders have been given, the nuisance has been promptly abated. Only 3 new houses have been completed during the year in the District, 7 new privies have been built, and 64 privies and privy vaults have been put in better order. Drains and ditches, numbering 38, have been cleaned and improved, by order, and the pigstyes are kept cleaner than formerly.

The Factory and Workshops' Act.

Workshops. I have inspected the Workshops in the Plomesgate Rural District, twice during the year, and in most cases they were satisfactory.

Occupations. The District, with the exception of Framlingham, Wickham Market and Orford, consists of scattered villages, the chief occupation being Agriculture.

Cottages. The cottage accommodation, which is fairly good, except in a few places, has been improved in some instances by rebuilding and additions. There is abundance of open space about the dwellings, and the surroundings in most instances are satisfactory. Several families having left the District, the least satisfactory cottages are untenanted.

New Houses. The District Council requires that all new houses shall be provided with a supply of good water, and sufficient privy accommodation, before occupation takes place.

Drainage. There are sewage works at Framlingham and a partial drainage system at Wickham Market and Orford. The other parishes have short drains and cesspits, which are attended to by the occupiers, as are also the privy vaults, as occasion requires. Earth closets are being increasingly substituted for the old privy vaults.

House refuse. House refuse is generally utilised by the occupiers on their gardens, or allotments. Several of the parishes are well provided with the latter.

Water. The water supply is chiefly from wells, in some cases from ponds, and in a few instances from the rivers. The quantity has been improved during the past year. The quality of the water is fairly good.

Dairies. The dairies in the district are kept exceedingly clean.

Bake-houses. The bake-houses have all been inspected, and in some, alterations have been made, as required, but recommendations for improvements in others are still to be carried out, and these will receive attention.

Nuisances. Any nuisance discovered by myself, or the Sanitary Inspector is reported to the Sanitary Committee at their ensuing fortnightly meeting, when instructions are given to the Inspector, which are at once attended to.

Infectious Diseases. All cases of the principal infectious diseases are notified to me. I visit them at once, and give such directions as will tend to prevent the disease spreading, disinfectants are freely supplied, and the patients are isolated as far as possible in their own houses, there being no isolation hospital in the District. Upon the termination of the case the premises and clothing are disinfected as thoroughly as possible by the Sanitary Inspector, or under his supervision.

I append tables of mortality and cases of infectious disease, classified according to age, locality and disease.

I beg to remain, my Lords and Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

J. CORDY KEER,

Medical Officer of Health to the Rural District of Plomesgate.

February 19*th*, 1904.